



## **The SPEISENSTEIN Files**

### ***9. Who Pays the Paper...***

*“It seldom happens that the person who tills the ground has the wherewithal to maintain himself till he reaps the harvest.”*

***Adam Smith,***

*The Wealth of Nations, 1776.*

Speisenstein and I are doing laps in the Club pool.

“So how did you run into him, Spicy?”

“We sort of met down here at the Club and got to talking. Chuck Robinson. Was a truck driver. Won the Florida lottery. Thirty million bucks. Just think! Well his dad died of a heart attack last fall, so he was interested in our heart research.”

“Then he came to see the labs?”

“Right. I showed him the toadfish work and he saw the clinical potential immediately. Immediately.”

“So what are you going to do now with all those buckaroos?”

“We need to get into molecular biology. You may not realize it, but that’s the way things are going. Nobody’s nobody without it these days.”

“And how d’you set about that?”

“No problem. You get to learn the terminology so you can communicate. That’s a snap - Scientific American level. Then you find some young guy who learned the techniques. They’re simple if you know how. All you need is that young guy that knows what to do. These animals are on the market these days.”

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Audley is winding up a long call to Speisenstein from London about his channel compatibility analyzer.

“What’s the weather like down there in Florida?”

“Darn sight better than we had in Wales, I’m telling you.”

“Lucky chaps! Well, I’ll take your advice. The channel analysis is still important to us. And it fits in splendidly with the molecular biology work.”

“Yeah. I guess so. By the way, I have funding for a post-doc molecular biologist. Know anybody on the market?”

“Gosh! Yes, I do. Do you remember the delightful young lady Dubois at the Llandiniogg meeting?”

“Sure I remember. She gave a great paper.”

“She has just finished a year with me and will be touring the Continent for three months. She’d be welcome to stay on here. But she wants to get back to the States. Some boy friend problem, I think. You never know. An exceptional girl. Highly recommended.”

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Double panes of reflecting glass protect Speisenstein and me from the heat of the Florida summer.

“Why don’t you do something useful, Spicy, in that Marine Biology Lab of

yours? Find out how to keep the sting rays away, for a start. My son trod on one the other day.”

“And why the hell doesn’t everybody stop telling me what I oughta do? I got my own problems.”

“Sorry Spice. I was only trying to be funny. What’s got into you?”

“That Robinson guy. I can’t get him off the back of my neck.”

“I thought he was giving you a lot of dough.”

“Sure he is. But, hell, he calls me every day to know how the work’s going. And have we made that break-through yet? And when will we find the cure for heart attacks. And god knows what else. So what am I to say? The guy just doesn’t understand.”

“That’s tough.”

“I told him frankly, yesterday. The future is in molecular biology. When that Dubois girl gets started we’ll begin to see. Is the air conditioning high enough?”

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“A Happy New Year to you, Stephanie.”

“And a Happy New Year to you, Mr Robinson. Did you have a good holiday?”

“Great. Great. So how’s it going?”

“Just a minute while I finish this tray.”

Robinson’s eyes follow the deft movements of the micropipette. “Dr Speisenstein was singing your praises,” he ventures.

“There. Finished. That’s good of him. He’s a darling.”

“He figures you’re the one that’ll find the big answer to heart attacks.”

“Whatever put that idea into his head, I wonder?”

“Isn’t that what you’re doing?”

“I’m not sure. Look, Mr Robinson, you know I sure am grateful for all your support. But I do need to straighten things out with you.”

She puts the tray in the rack, makes a note in her work book and turns back with the look of someone confessing to a criminal offense.

“Let’s go into the coffee room. Cream? Sugar?”

“Cream? I never thought... Sure, give me both.”

“You see,” begins Dubois. “I know how much your father meant to you. And, believe me, if I could plan a program which would come up with a cure for heart attacks in two years, I’d jump at it. Who wouldn’t? But, if it was as easy as that, it would have been done already. So I don’t think we can be looking for some major break-through. It might turn up, of course. But its not likely. And you can’t plan for it, any more than you can plan to win the Florida Lottery. Meantime, what we scientists have to do is just to try to understand better how things work. That’s our job. The more you understand how something works, the more you’re likely to be able to fix it when it goes wrong. You see what I mean?”

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“Hi there, Chuck. Howya doin? Where you been all these weeks?”

“High, Spicy. Good to see you.”

“And hey, thanks for renewing the grant. You’re a great guy. So you liked my report? That young protegee of yours is doing a great job. A great job. I can see that big break-through coming, I tell you.”

“Hey Spicy, that’ll be the day. We’ll drink to that. But the way I figure it is this. Its not the kinda thing you can plan for, any more than you can plan to win the Florida Lottery. What you scientists have to do is just try to understand better how things work. That’s your job. The more you understand how somethings works, the more you’re likely to be able to fix it when it goes wrong. See what I mean?”

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